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VOICE SWITCHING SYSTEM CAPABLE OF IMPROVING A QUALITY OF  
CONVERSATION

Background of the Invention:

This invention relates to a voice switching  
5 system for use in a teleconference system, a hand-free  
telephone system, and the like.

An example of such a voice switching system used  
conventionally in an electronic conference system is  
exemplified, as a first prior art, in unexamined Japanese  
10 Patent Publication No.Hei 1 245661, namely, 245661/1989.  
The publication paper discloses a howling compression device  
which compares a transmission signal level with a reception  
signal level so as to detect whether or not a difference  
between both levels exceeds a predetermined value. When the  
15 difference exceeds the predetermined value, the howling  
compression device either the transmission signal or the  
reception signal which is detected to be lower in level. On  
the other hand, the howling compression device prevents an  
echo canceller from amending an estimated impulse response,  
20 when the transmission signal level is detected to be higher  
than the reception signal level.

Another example of such a conventional voice  
switching system is exemplified, as a second prior art, in  
unexamined Japanese Patent Publication No.Hei 6-253001,  
25 namely, 253001/1994. The publication paper discloses a  
voice control circuit which prevents a voice system of a  
teleconference system from an erroneous operation due to a  
change of a transmitting input level dependent on an amount

of echo suppression by an echo canceller. For this purpose, in the voice control circuit, from an aforehead section of an echo canceller, an input level of a transmission signal is detected by a transmitting input level detector while a  
 5 reception signal level is detected by a receiving input level detector. A detection output of the transmitting input level detector is then compared with that of the receiving input level detector by the use of a comparator. Dependent on a result of the comparison, an amount of attenuation by  
 10 a transmission signal attenuator or a reception signal attenuator is adjusted in the voice control circuit disclosed in the publication paper.

Still another example of such a conventional voice switching system is exemplified, as a third prior art,  
 15 in unexamined Japanese Patent Publication No. Hei 4-22249, namely, 22249/1992. The publication paper discloses a  
 a loudspeaking telephone system which <sup>controls</sup> ~~controls~~ an amount of  
 attenuation of a variable attenuator only by voices through  
 a line in which an echo is cancelled. Namely, in the  
 20 loudspeaking telephone system, an output of a microphone is attenuated by a primary variable attenuator, and then, an output of the primary variable attenuator is sent to a line. A voice received through the line is attenuated by a secondary  
 variable attenuator to be supplied to a speaker. Thus, an  
 25 amount of attenuation of the primary and the secondary variable attenuators are controlled by the received voice of which an echo is cancelled in the line.

However, all of a first, a second or a third prior

art disclosed in each of the above-mentioned publication  
papers are such techniques as suppressing howling. As will  
later be described more in detail, <sup>a mismatch in</sup> ~~an unmatch of~~ timing is  
inevitably caused to occur between a signal to be attenuated  
and a reference signal for determining an amount of  
attenuation, when a certain delay exists in either the signal  
to be attenuated or the reference signal. As a result, an  
attenuation is inserted within a conversation at an  
<sup>inappropriate</sup> ~~unappropriate~~ timing to deteriorate <sup>the</sup> ~~a~~ quality of the  
conversation.

#### Summary of the Invention:

It is therefore an object of the present invention  
to provide a voice switching system which is capable of an  
appropriate switching to improve a quality of <sup>the</sup> ~~a~~ conversation.

Other objects of the present invention will  
become clear as the description proceeds.

According to an aspect of the present invention,  
there is provided a voice switching system comprising:  
transmitting side attenuation <sup>section</sup> ~~means~~ for attenuating a  
microphone input voice signal having a first level to produce  
a <sup>transmitted</sup> ~~transmitting~~ voice signal having a second level;  
receiving side attenuation <sup>section</sup> ~~means~~ for attenuating a <sup>received</sup> ~~receiving~~  
voice signal having a third level to produce a speaker output  
voice signal having a fourth level; transmitting side  
control <sup>section</sup> ~~means~~ for comparing the first level of the microphone  
input voice signal with the fourth level of the speaker output  
voice signal to obtain a primary difference therebetween, the  
transmitting side control <sup>section</sup> ~~means~~ controlling, dependent on

the primary difference, an amount of attenuation of the microphone input voice signal in the transmitting side attenuation ~~means~~ <sup>section</sup>; and receiving side control ~~means~~ <sup>section</sup> for comparing the second level of the ~~transmitting~~ <sup>transmitted</sup> voice signal with the third level of the ~~receiving~~ <sup>received</sup> voice signal to obtain a secondary difference therebetween, the receiving side control ~~means~~ <sup>section</sup> controlling, dependent on the secondary difference, an amount of attenuation of the receiving voice signal in the receiving side attenuation ~~means~~ <sup>section</sup>.

The receiving side control ~~means~~ <sup>section</sup> may further comprise: a transmitting side signal delay buffer for providing the transmitting voice signal with a delay time, the delay time corresponding to a time for which the ~~transmitting~~ <sup>transmitted</sup> voice signal returns as the ~~receiving~~ <sup>received</sup> voice signal through a communication line; a transmitting side signal power estimation section for estimating a signal power of the ~~transmitting~~ <sup>transmitted</sup> voice signal outputted from the transmitting side signal delay buffer; a receiving side signal power estimation section for estimating a signal power of the receiving voice signal; a first comparator for comparing a primary estimated signal power of the ~~transmitting~~ <sup>transmitted</sup> voice signal estimated by the transmitting side signal power estimation section with a secondary estimated signal power of the ~~receiving~~ <sup>received</sup> voice signal estimated by the receiving side signal power estimation section to obtain a ratio therebetween; and a first attenuation amount calculation ~~means~~ <sup>section</sup> for calculating an amount of attenuation in the receiving side attenuation ~~means~~ <sup>section</sup> based on the ratio

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outputted from the first comparator.

a The ~~receiving~~<sup>received</sup> voice signal inputted to the receiving side signal power estimation section may be silent at the initial time when the ~~transmitting~~<sup>transmitted</sup> voice signal is  
 5 inputted to the transmitting side signal delay buffer.

a The transmitting side control ~~means~~<sup>section</sup> may further comprise: a microphone input power estimation section for estimating a signal power of the microphone input voice signal; a speaker output signal delay buffer for providing  
 10 the speaker output voice signal with a delay time, the delay time corresponding to a time for which a voice outputted from the speaker becomes the microphone input voice signal by a sound coupling with the microphone; a first speaker output power estimation section for estimating a signal power of the  
 15 speaker output voice signal outputted from the speaker output signal delay buffer; a second comparator for comparing an estimated signal power of the microphone input voice signal estimated by the microphone input power estimation section with an estimated signal power of the speaker output voice  
 20 signal estimated by the first speaker output power estimation section to obtain a ratio therebetween; and a second attenuation amount calculation ~~means~~<sup>section</sup> for calculating an amount of attenuation in the transmitting side attenuation  
 a ~~means~~<sup>section</sup> based on the ratio outputted from the second  
 a  
 25 comparator.

The microphone input voice signal inputted to the microphone input power estimation section may be silent at the initial time when the speaker output voice signal is

inputted to the speaker output signal delay buffer.

According to another aspect of the present invention, there is provided a voice switching system of the type described, in which the transmitting side control ~~means~~ <sup>section</sup> may further comprise: a ~~reverberation~~ <sup>residual</sup> echo power estimation section for estimating a signal power of a ~~reverberation~~ <sup>residual</sup> echo signal obtained by the microphone input voice signal passing through ~~a sound~~ <sup>an acoustic</sup> echo canceller; a second speaker output power estimation section for estimating a signal power of the speaker output voice signal passing through the ~~sound~~ <sup>acoustic</sup> echo canceller; a third comparator for comparing an estimated signal power of the ~~reverberation~~ <sup>residual</sup> echo signal estimated by the ~~reverberation~~ <sup>residual</sup> echo power estimation section with an estimated signal power of the speaker output voice signal estimated by the second speaker output power estimation section to obtain a ratio therebetween; and a third attenuation amount calculation ~~means~~ <sup>selection</sup> for calculating an amount of attenuation in the transmitting side attenuation ~~means~~ <sup>selection</sup> based on the ratio outputted from the third comparator.

The ~~sound~~ <sup>acoustic</sup> echo canceller may sequentially renew an adaptive filter ~~factor~~ <sup>coefficient</sup> stored in an adaptive filter ~~factor~~ <sup>coefficient</sup> buffer by the use of the ~~reverberation~~ <sup>residual</sup> echo signal and a value of an adaptive filter tap input buffer, the ~~reverberation~~ <sup>residual</sup> echo signal being outputted from a subtractor to which the microphone input voice signal is inputted, and wherein sum of products between the adaptive filter ~~factor~~ <sup>coefficient</sup> of the adaptive filter ~~factor~~ <sup>coefficient</sup> buffer and the value of the adaptive

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conventional voice switching system;

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illustrated in Fig. 2;

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switching system according to a second embodiment of the



present invention; and

Fig. 8 is a block diagram for partially showing  
~~a sound~~ <sup>an acoustic</sup> echo canceller and a transmission side control  
 section of the voice switching system illustrated in Fig. 7.

#### Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiments:

Referring to Fig. 1, description is, at first made  
 about a conventional voice switch in order to facilitate an  
 understanding of the present invention.

Fig. 1 is a block diagram for showing a  
 constitution of the conventional voice switch.

In Fig. 1, a receiving voice signal received from  
 a side of a communication line is inputted into a receiving  
 side attenuation section 101 and a control section 103. On  
 the other hand, ~~a microphone~~ <sup>an</sup> input voice signal gathered by  
 a microphone 105 is inputted into the control section 103 and  
 a transmitting side attenuation section 102. The control  
 section 103 ~~controls~~ <sup>controls</sup> an amount of attenuation in the  
 receiving side attenuation section 101 and the transmitting  
 side attenuation section 102. By this control, the  
 receiving side attenuation section 101 attenuates the  
~~receiving~~ <sup>received</sup> voice signal to ~~make a voice be generated~~ <sup>generate</sup> to ~~be generated~~ <sup>outputted</sup> from a  
 speaker 104. The speaker 104 ~~enlarges the receiving~~ <sup>broadcasts</sup> ~~voice~~ <sup>received</sup>  
 all over a room. On the other hand, the transmitting side  
 attenuation section 102 attenuates the ~~microphone input~~ <sup>output</sup>  
 voice signal inputted from the microphone 105 to ~~make a~~  
~~transmitting~~ <sup>transmitted</sup> voice signal ~~be outputted~~ <sup>output</sup> to the side of the  
 communication line.

With reference to Fig. 1 continued, description

is made as regards an operation of the conventional voice switch.

In Fig. 1, the control section 103 compares a level of the ~~receiving~~<sup>received</sup> voice signal with that of the microphone input voice signal inputted from the microphone 105. As a result of the comparison, the control section 103 ~~controls~~<sup>controls</sup> the receiving side attenuation section 101 and the transmitting side attenuation section 102 so that either the ~~receiving~~<sup>received</sup> voice signal or the microphone input voice signal having a lower level may further be attenuated.

Herein, it is assumed that for example, a remote end speaker vocalizes, that the ~~receiving~~ voice signal is received, and that no voice signal is inputted into the microphone 105. The ~~receiving~~<sup>received</sup> voice signal is ~~enlarged~~<sup>broadcast</sup> over the room by the speaker 104 through the receiving side attenuation section 101. The voice signal outputted from the speaker 104 turns to the microphone 105 to be again inputted thereinto. When a gain of sound coupling of the voice signal turning to the microphone 105 from the speaker 104 is smaller than a gain of the control section 103, it is determined in the control section 103 that an input level of the transmitting side is smaller than an input level of the receiving side. The control section 103 ~~controls~~<sup>controls</sup> the transmitting side attenuation section 102 to make an amount of attenuation larger.

Next, it is also assumed that for example, a near end speaker vocalizes, that a voice signal is inputted into the microphone 105, and that no ~~receiving~~ voice signal is

received. The ~~microphone~~ input voice signal is transmitted through the transmitting side attenuation section 102. The ~~transmitting~~ voice signal thus transmitted returns as the ~~receiving~~ voice signal through a sound coupling between the speaker 104 and the microphone 105 at the remote end side. When a gain of the sound coupling between the speaker 104 and the microphone 105 is smaller than a gain of the receiving side attenuation section 101, it is determined in the control section 103 that an input level of the receiving side is smaller than an input level of the transmitting side. The control section 103 ~~controls~~ <sup>controls</sup> the receiving side attenuation section 101 to make an amount of attenuation larger.

However, in the conventional voice switch illustrated in Fig. 1, as mentioned in the preamble of the instant specification, ~~an mismatch~~ <sup>a mismatch</sup> of timing is inevitably caused to occur between a signal to be attenuated and a reference signal to which the control section 103 refers for determining an amount of attenuation, when a certain delay exists in a communication line, for example, in a case that a processing of voice encoding is inserted therein. A certain delay is also generated while a voice outputted from a speaker ~~turns~~ <sup>return</sup> to a microphone to become an input voice of the microphone, for example, in a case that a signal buffer is inserted preceding the speaker output or following the microphone input. In ~~the~~ <sup>this</sup> case, the ~~mismatch~~ <sup>mismatch</sup> of timing is also caused to occur between the signal to be attenuated and the reference signal. An attenuation is inserted within a conversation at an ~~unappropriate~~ <sup>inappropriate</sup> timing to deteriorate ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup>

quality of the conversation.

Now, referring to Figs. 2 through 6, description will proceed to a voice switch according to a first embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 2 is a block diagram for showing a constitution of the voice switch according to the first embodiment.

In Fig. 2, a <sup>received</sup> ~~receiving~~ voice signal A transmitted from an unillustrated communication line is inputted into a receiving side attenuation section 1 and a receiving side control section 3a. A <sup>transmitted</sup> ~~transmitting~~ voice signal D attenuated by a transmitting side attenuation section 2 is also inputted into the receiving side control section 3a. The <sup>transmitted</sup> ~~transmitting~~ voice signal D is transmitted to the unillustrated communication line.

Thus, <sup>The received</sup> ~~the receiving~~ voice signal A and the <sup>transmitted</sup> ~~transmitting~~ voice signal D <sup>are inputted into</sup> ~~being inputted~~ the receiving side control section 3a, which <sup>transmitted</sup> ~~transmitting~~ compares a level of the receiving voice signal A and that of the ~~transmitting~~ voice signal D to detect a difference therebetween. Dependent on the difference thus detected, the receiving side control section 3a <sup>controls</sup> ~~controls~~ an amount of attenuation in the receiving side attenuation section 1. The receiving side attenuation section 1 <sup>received</sup> ~~receiving~~ attenuates the voice signal A to produce a speaker output voice signal B. The speaker output voice signal B is transmitted to a speaker 4 and a transmitting side control section 3b. On the other hand, a voice spreading from the speaker 4 and a voice signal produced by a near end

speaker are gathered by a microphone 5 to produce a microphone input voice signal C. The microphone input voice signal C is inputted to the transmitting side attenuation section 2 and the transmitting side control section 3b. The transmitting side control section 3b compares a level of the microphone input voice signal C and that of the speaker output voice signal B to detect a difference therebetween. Dependent on the difference thus detected, the transmitting side control section 3b <sup>controls</sup> ~~controls~~ an amount of attenuation in the transmitting side attenuation section 2. The transmitting side attenuation section 2 produces the <sup>transmitted</sup> ~~transmitting~~ voice signal D. Attenuated by the transmitting side attenuation section 2, the transmitting voice signal D is transmitted to the unillustrated communication line.

Next, referring to Figs. 3 and 4, detailed description is made <sup>of</sup> ~~about~~ the receiving side control section 3a illustrated in Fig 2.

Fig. 3 is a block diagram for showing an internal constitution of the receiving side control section 3a.

In Fig. 3, the <sup>received</sup> ~~receiving~~ voice signal A is inputted to a receiving side signal power estimation section 32. On the other hand, the <sup>transmitted</sup> ~~transmitting~~ voice signal D is inputted to a transmitting side signal delay buffer 34. An output of the transmitting side signal delay buffer 34 is inputted to a transmitting side signal power estimation section 33. An output of the receiving side signal power estimation section 32 and an output of the transmitting side

signal power estimation section 33 are both inputted to a comparator 31 to be compared with each other. An output of the comparator 31 is inputted to an attenuation amount calculation section 30. The attenuation amount calculation section 30 outputs a receiving side attenuation amount F. The receiving side attenuation amount F is inputted to the receiving side attenuation section 1 illustrated in Fig. 2.

a The receiving side signal power estimation section 32 estimates a voice signal power <sup>of the voice signal A</sup> <sub>received</sub> which is through the unillustrated communication line (lefthand side of Fig. 2) and which is produced by a remote end speaker. The receiving side signal power estimation section 32 outputs the estimated voice signal power to the comparator 31. The transmitting side signal power estimation section 33 estimates a voice signal power of the <sup>transmitted</sup> ~~transmitting~~ voice signal D which is delayed through the transmitting side signal delay buffer 34. The transmitting side signal power estimation section 33 outputs the estimated voice signal power to the comparator 31.

20 The comparator 31 compares the estimated voice signal power outputted from the receiving side signal power estimation section 32 with the estimated voice signal power outputted from the transmitting side signal power estimation section 33 to detect a ratio between the both estimated voice signal power. The ratio thus detected is outputted to the attenuation amount calculation section 30. The attenuation amount calculation section 30 calculates and produces a receiving side attenuation amount based on the ratio of the

powers outpitted

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a voice signal power which is corresponding to the speaker 4 and the microphone 5 illustrated in Fig. 2 and which is produced by a near end speaker. The microphone input power estimation section 42 outputs the estimated voice signal power to the comparator 41. The comparator 41 compares the estimated voice signal power of the speaker output voice signal B outputted from the speaker output power estimation section 43 with the estimated voice signal power produced by the near end speaker outputted from the microphone input power estimation section 42 to detect a ratio between the <sup>two</sup> ~~both~~ <sub>powers</sub> estimated voice signal ~~power~~. The ratio thus detected is outputted to the attenuation amount calculation section 40. The attenuation amount calculation section 40 calculates and produces a transmitting side attenuation amount based on the ratio of the <sup>two</sup> ~~both~~ <sub>voice signal powers</sub> <sup>outputted</sup> ~~inputted~~ from the comparator 41. The transmitting side attenuation amount is outputted to the transmitting side attenuation section 2 illustrated in Fig. 2.

A relation between the ratio and an output of the attenuation amount calculation section 40 is, for example, shown by a graph in Fig. 6. Fig. 6 shows the graph in which the ratio is depicted in a quadrature axis while the amount of attenuation is depicted in an axis of ordinates. As clearly shown in Fig. 6, the amount of attenuation becomes small when the ratio is small. On the contrary, the amount of attenuation becomes large when the ratio is large.

With reference to Figs. 2, 3 and 5 continued, description is made <sup>regarding</sup> ~~as regards~~ an operation of the voice



switch according to the first embodiment of the present invention. First, a control of the receiving side attenuation section 1 is hereinafter described. Herein, it is assumed that the microphone input voice signal C gathered by the microphone 5 and outputted therefrom exists, and that the ~~receiving~~ <sup>received</sup> voice signal A transmitted through the communication line does not exist, namely is silent. In this time, the microphone input voice signal C is inputted to the transmitting side control section 3b and the transmitting side attenuation section 2. Since the speaker output voice signal B is not inputted to the transmitting side control section 3b from the receiving side attenuation section 1, the transmitting side control section 3b outputs a small amount of transmitting side attenuation to the transmitting side attenuation section 2. As a result, the transmitting side attenuation section 2 scarcely attenuates any microphone input voice signal C but outputs the ~~transmitted~~ <sup>transmitted</sup> voice signal D to the communication line as a transmission signal. The ~~transmitted~~ <sup>transmitted</sup> voice signal D outputted to the communication line is subjected to a sound coupling with an unillustrated speaker and an unillustrated microphone at the remote end side. The ~~transmitted~~ <sup>transmitted</sup> voice signal D is returned as the ~~receiving~~ <sup>received</sup> voice signal A through the communication line. In this case, it takes about several hundreds of milliseconds for the ~~transmitted~~ <sup>transmitted</sup> voice signal D to be returned as the ~~receiving~~ <sup>received</sup> voice signal A through the communication line.

This returned ~~receiving~~ <sup>received</sup> voice signal A is

inputted to the receiving side attenuation section 1 and the ~~receiving~~ <sup>received</sup> side control section 3a. In the receiving side control section 3a illustrated in Fig. 3, the receiving voice signal A is inputted to a receiving side signal power estimation section 32. The receiving side signal power estimation section 32 estimates a signal power of the receiving voice signal A. Thus estimated signal power of the receiving voice signal A is outputted to the comparator 31. On the other hand, the ~~transmitting~~ <sup>transmitted</sup> voice signal D outputted from the transmitting side attenuation section 2 in Fig. 2 is inputted to the transmitting side signal delay buffer 34 of the receiving side control section 3a to be delayed therein. The delayed ~~transmitting~~ <sup>transmitted</sup> voice signal D is thereafter outputted to the transmitting side signal power estimation section 33. The transmitting side signal power estimation section 33 estimates a signal power of the transmitting voice signal D. The estimated signal power of the ~~transmitting~~ <sup>transmitted</sup> voice signal D is outputted to the comparator 31.

Accordingly, the comparator 31 compares a signal power of the receiving voice signal A and that of the ~~transmitting~~ <sup>transmitted</sup> voice signal D. In this comparison by the comparator 31, the delayed amount of the ~~transmitting~~ <sup>transmitted</sup> voice signal D by the transmitting side signal delay buffer 34 is adjusted to be equal to a delayed amount due to the communication line. In other words, the delayed amount of the transmitting voice signal D by the transmitting side ~~signal delay~~ <sup>time delay</sup> buffer 34 is adjusted to be equal to the delayed

<sup>a</sup>  
<sup>a</sup> amount (In this example, several hundreds of milliseconds, as mentioned above) ~~which is generated until the~~ <sup>transmitted</sup> ~~transmitting~~ voice signal is subjected to sound coupling by the speaker and the microphone with a voice produced by a remote end speaker through the communication line and again returned as <sup>a</sup> the ~~receiving~~ <sup>received</sup> voice signal A through the communication line. When a gain of the sound coupling does not exceed "1", the comparator 31 outputs such a signal as increasing an amount of attenuation to the attenuation amount calculation section 10 30. The attenuation amount calculation section 30 outputs a large amount of <sup>the</sup> ~~receiving~~ side attenuation F based on the output by the comparator 31, namely, based on a ratio between <sup>a</sup> ~~both the signal powers of the receiving~~ <sup>received</sup> voice signal A and <sup>a</sup> the ~~transmitting~~ <sup>transmitted</sup> voice signal D. The ~~large amount of~~ <sup>majority</sup> receiving side attenuation F is outputted to the receiving side attenuation section 1 in Fig. 2. Therefore, the speaker output voice signal B outputted from the receiving side attenuation section 1 is never outputted as the receiving voice signal A which <sup>a</sup> ~~is corresponding~~ <sup>corresponds</sup> to the <sup>a</sup> ~~transmitted~~ <sup>transmitted</sup> voice signal D returned through the communication line. As a result, any voice of the receiving voice signal A is not outputted from the speaker 4.

Next, a control of the transmitting side attenuation section 2 is hereinunder described. Herein, it 25 is assumed that the receiving voice signal A is inputted to the receiving side control section 3a through the communication line in Fig. 2, and that the microphone input voice signal C inputted through the microphone 5 is silent.

In this case, the receiving side control section 3a requests a small amount of attenuation to the receiving side attenuation section 1. Consequently, any <sup>received</sup> ~~receiving~~ voice signal A is scarcely attenuated by the receiving side attenuation section 1 and is outputted therefrom to the speaker 4 and the transmitting side control section 3b as the speaker output voice signal B. The speaker output voice signal B supplied to the speaker 4 from the receiving side attenuation section 1 drives the speaker 4 to produce a voice.

Through a sound coupling between the speaker 4 and the microphone 5, the voice turns from the speaker 4 to the microphone 5 as depicted by a dotted line in Fig. 2 to <sup>become</sup> ~~be~~ a microphone input. From the production of the voice to the sound coupling by which the voice is gathered with the microphone 5, delay is inevitably caused to occur. On the other hand, the speaker output voice signal B is inputted to the transmitting side control section 3b illustrated in Fig. 5. The speaker output voice signal B is therein delayed by the speaker output signal delay buffer 44 to be inputted to the speaker output power estimation section 43. An amount of delay by the speaker output signal delay buffer 44 is adjusted to be equal to a delay time ~~which is generated~~ until the speaker output voice signal B is outputted from the speaker 4 as a voice and is gathered by the microphone 5 to be outputted as the microphone input voice signal C with a sound coupling between the speaker and the microphone.

After being delayed by the speaker output signal delay buffer 44, the speaker output voice signal B is inputted

to the speaker output power estimation section 43, as mentioned above. Therein, a signal power of the speaker output voice signal B is estimated. As a result, the estimated signal power of the speaker output voice signal B is inputted to the comparator 41. On the other hand, the microphone input voice signal C outputted from the microphone 5 is inputted to the microphone input power estimation section 42. Therein, a signal power of the microphone input voice signal C is estimated. As a result, the estimated signal power of the microphone input voice signal C is inputted to the comparator 41. Accordingly, the comparator 41 compares the estimated signal power of the speaker output voice signal B with the estimated signal power of the microphone input voice signal C.

In this comparison by the comparator 41, when a gain of the sound coupling between the speaker 4 and the microphone 5 does not exceed "1", the comparator 41 outputs such a signal as increasing an amount of attenuation to the attenuation amount calculation section 40. Based on the result of the comparison by the comparator 41, the attenuation amount calculation section 40 calculates a transmitting side attenuation amount E to be outputted to the transmitting side attenuation section 2. Accordingly, the transmitting side attenuation section 2 largely attenuates the microphone input voice signal C with reference to the transmitting side attenuation amount E. Therefore, even if a voice outputted from the speaker 4 ~~turn~~<sup>returns</sup> to the microphone 5 and is gathered thereby, the voice is largely attenuated

by the transmitting side attenuation section 2. As a result, the microphone input voice signal C is never included in the transmitting voice signal D. Thus, in the voice switch according to the first embodiment, even if delay is generated in a communication line or delay is <sup>effected</sup> ~~generated~~ until a voice outputted from the speaker 4 <sup>returns</sup> ~~turns~~ to the microphone 5 to become a microphone input, the receiving side control section 3a and the transmitting side control section 3b are capable of adequate switching operations, respectively. Accordingly, <sup>the</sup> ~~a~~ quality of conversation is ~~so~~ improved.

Referring to Figs. 7 and 8, description will proceed to a voice switch according to a second embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 7 is a block diagram for showing a constitution of the voice switch according to the second embodiment.

As illustrated in Fig. 7, the voice switch according to the second embodiment has a structure similar to that of the first embodiment. Similar portions are designated by like reference numerals.

As will be clearly understood by comparing Fig. 7 with Fig. 2, ~~a reference numeral 3c different from that of Fig. 2 is attached to a~~ <sup>the</sup> transmitting side control section in Fig. 7. Moreover, <sup>an acoustic</sup> ~~a sound~~ echo canceller 6 is further provided in addition to the <sup>elements found in</sup> ~~constitution of~~ Fig. 2. A control of the transmitting side control section 3c is related to the <sup>acoustic</sup> ~~sound~~ echo canceller 6.

Namely, the speaker output voice signal B

outputted from the receiving side attenuation section 1 is not only outputted to the speaker 4 but also inputted to the transmitting side control section 3c through the ~~sound~~<sup>acoustic</sup> echo canceller 6. On the other hand, the microphone input voice signal C outputted from the microphone 5 is also inputted to the ~~sound~~<sup>acoustic</sup> echo canceller 6 to be outputted therefrom as a ~~reverberation~~<sup>residual</sup> echo signal G. The ~~reverberation~~<sup>residual</sup> echo signal G is supplied to both the transmitting side attenuation section 2 and the transmitting side control section 3c. Other portions are similar to those of the first embodiment illustrated in Fig. 2.

Referring to Fig. 8 with reference to Fig. 7 continued, description is made as ~~regards~~<sup>to</sup> the ~~sound~~<sup>acoustic</sup> echo canceller 6 and the transmitting side control section 3c. Fig. 8 is a block diagram for showing ~~the~~<sup>the</sup> internal constitutions of the ~~sound~~<sup>acoustic</sup> echo canceller 6 and the transmitting side control section 3c.

As illustrated in Fig. 8, the transmitting side control section 3c comprises an attenuation amount calculation section 50, a comparator 51, a ~~reverberation~~<sup>residual</sup> echo power estimation section 52, and a speaker output power estimation section 53. On the other hand, the ~~sound~~<sup>acoustic</sup> echo canceller 6 comprises an adaptive filter 61 and a subtractor 65. The adaptive filter 61 comprises an adaptive filter tap input buffer 62, sum of products operator 63 and an adaptive filter ~~factor~~<sup>coefficient</sup> buffer 64. The above-mentioned microphone input voice signal C outputted from the microphone 5 is inputted to the subtractor 65. Further, an output of the

sum of products operator 63 is also inputted to the subtractor 65.

As shown in Fig. 8, the ~~reverberation~~ <sup>residual</sup> echo signal G is outputted not only to the ~~reverberation~~ <sup>residual</sup> echo power estimation section 52 in the transmitting side control section 3c but also to the adaptive filter 61 in the ~~sound~~ <sup>acoustic</sup> echo canceller 6. The speaker output voice signal B outputted from the transmitting side attenuation section 1 illustrated in Fig. 7 is inputted to the adaptive filter tap input buffer 62. An output of the adaptive filter tap input buffer 62 is inputted to the speaker output power estimation section 53.

The adaptive filter 61 sequentially renews an adaptive filter ~~factor~~ <sup>coefficient</sup> stored in the adaptive filter ~~factor~~ <sup>coefficient</sup> buffer 64 by the use of the ~~reverberation~~ <sup>residual</sup> echo signal G and a value of the adaptive filter tap input buffer 62. The sum of products between the adaptive filter ~~factor~~ <sup>coefficient</sup> of the adaptive filter ~~factor~~ <sup>coefficient</sup> buffer 64 and the value of the adaptive filter tap input buffer 62 is calculated in the sum of products operator 63. A result of the calculation is outputted to the subtractor 65. The subtractor 65 subtracts the result of the calculation in the sum of products operator 63 from the microphone input voice signal C to produce the ~~reverberation~~ <sup>residual</sup> echo signal G. The speaker output power estimation section 53 estimates a signal power of the speaker output voice signal B. The estimated signal power of the speaker output voice signal B is outputted to the comparator 61. The ~~reverberation~~ <sup>residual</sup> echo signal G is inputted to the



a <sup>residual</sup>  
~~reverberation~~ echo power estimation section 52 in the  
 transmitting side control section 3c. The comparator 51  
 compares a signal power of the speaker output voice signal  
 3 with a signal power of a voice of a near end speaker  
 a 5 outputted from the <sup>residual</sup>~~reverberation~~ echo power estimation  
 section 52 to detect a ratio therebetween. The ratio is  
 outputted from the comparator 51 to the attenuation amount  
 calculation section 50. The attenuation amount calculation  
 section 50 <sup>calculates</sup>~~calculate~~ and <sup>decides</sup>~~decide~~ an amount of transmitting  
 10 side attenuation based on the ratio inputted from the  
 comparator 51. The amount of transmitting side attenuation  
 is outputted to the transmitting side attenuation section 2  
 in Fig. 7.

In the second embodiment, the adaptive filter tap  
 15 input buffer 62 in Fig. 8 functions similarly to the speaker  
 output signal delay buffer 44 in the first embodiment.  
 Accordingly, the speaker output signal delay buffer 44 in the  
 first embodiment can be replaced with the adaptive filter tap  
 input buffer 62. With this structure, in which the voice  
 20 switch of the present invention is used together with the  
 a <sup>acoustic</sup>~~sound~~ echo canceller 6, the speaker output signal delay  
 buffer required for delaying the speaker output voice signal  
 can be omitted. Further, with reference to a result of study  
 of factors in the adaptive filter 61, an amount of delay of  
 25 the speaker output voice signal B can be controlled.

As described above, according to the present  
 invention, a level of the speaker output voice signal and a  
 level of the microphone input voice signal are compared with

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